

To Be or Not To Be
That Really IS the Question

Maidenhead

1 June 2019

To be, or not to be: that is the question:

**Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them? To die: to sleep;
No more; and by a sleep to say we end
The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to, 'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wish'd. To die, to sleep;
To sleep: perchance to dream: ay, there's the rub;
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause: there's the respect
That makes calamity of so long life;
For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,**

**The insolence of office and the spurns
That patient merit of the unworthy takes,
When he himself might his quietus make
With a bare bodkin? who would fardels bear,
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
But that the dread of something after death,
The undiscover'd country from whose bourn
No traveller returns, puzzles the will
And makes us rather bear those ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of?
Thus conscience does make cowards of us all;
And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
And enterprises of great pith and moment
With this regard their currents turn awry,
And lose the name of action.**

Hamlet, Act III, Scene I

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



Abraham Maslow
(1908-1970)



KNOW THYSELF

Oracle at Delphi

**He who knows the All but fails to know himself,
misses everything**

Gospel of Thomas, 67

“If you begin to be what you are you will realize everything, but to begin to be what you are you must come out of what you are not. You are not those thoughts which are turning, turning in your mind; you are not those changing feelings; you are not the different decisions you make and the different wills you have; you are not that separate ego.

**Well, then, what are you? You will find when you have come out of what you are not, that the ripple on the water is whispering to you ‘I am That’, the birds in the mango tree are singing to you ‘I am That’, the moon and the stars are shining beacons to you, ‘I am That’: you are in everything in the world and everything in the world is in you since for you it only exists because it is mirrored in you; and at the same time you are that—
everything”**

Dr Roles conversation with Sri Santananda Sarasvati, Study Society 1961



Socrates

The soul when using the body as an instrument of perception, that is to say, when using the sense of sight or hearing or some other sense (for the meaning of perceiving through the body is perceiving through the senses) – were we not saying that the soul is then dragged by the body into the region of the changeable, and wanders and is confused; the world spins round her, and she is like a drunkard, when she touches change?

But when the soul contemplates in herself, by herself, she passes into the realm of the pure, the eternal, the undying and unchanging. Being akin to these she always stays there whenever she is by herself and it is in her power to do so. She ceases wandering and she is unmoving, because she has attained these qualities. And this state of the soul is called wisdom.

Plato: Phaedo 79

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Epictetus

The *Handbook* of Epictetus begins with these words:

- **Some things are up to us and some things are not up to us.**
- **Our opinions are up to us, and our impulses, desires, aversions—in short, whatever is our own doing.**

Patanjali

The fruit of negative feeling is endless suffering and ignorance. One should learn to cultivate the opposite. What is the opposite? Memory of the principle that the fruit of negative feeling is endless suffering and ignorance is sufficient.

Patanjali Yoga Sutras 2.34

The Bhagavad Gita

Those external relations which bring cold and heat, pain and happiness, they come and go; they are not permanent. Endure them bravely, O Prince!

The hero whose soul is unmoved by circumstance, who accepts pleasure and pain with equanimity, only he is fit for immortality.

That which is not, shall never be; that which is, shall never cease to be. To the wise, these truths are self-evident.

The Spirit, which pervades all that we see, is imperishable. Nothing can destroy the Spirit.

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Hamlet, Act III, Scene I

not my will, but thine, be done

- **Dietrich Bonhoeffer — When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die.**
- **Charles Spurgeon — I have now concentrated all my prayers into one... that I may die to self, and live wholly to Him.**
- **Martin Luther — Until a man is nothing, God can make nothing out of him.**
- **Thomas a Kempis — The more a man dies to himself, the more he begins to live unto God.**
- **D. L. Moody — Let God have your life; He can do more with it than you can.**
- **Richard Sibbes— Self-emptiness prepares us for spiritual fullness.**

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Fearlessness, clean living, unceasing concentration on wisdom, readiness to give, self-control, a spirit of sacrifice, regular study of the scriptures, austerities, candour, harmlessness, truth, absence of wrath, renunciation, contentment, straightforwardness, compassion towards all, uncovetousness, courtesy, modesty, constancy, valour, forgiveness, fortitude, purity, freedom from hate and vanity

Gita, ch 16 vv 1-3, translated by Sri Purohit Swami

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Ficino

... if we wish to attain what we are seeking let us not be moved or distracted by many things, but let us remain in unity as much as we are able, since we find eternal unity and the one eternity, not through movement or multiplicity, but through being still and being one.

(Ficino Letters IV; 5)

Yoga Sutras of Patanjali

योगश्चित्तवृत्तिनिरोधः ॥२॥

Yoga is to still the movements of the mind. 2.

**What is this life if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare.
No time to stand beneath the boughs
And stare as long as sheep or cows.
No time to see, when woods we pass,
Where squirrels hide their nuts in grass.
No time to see, in broad daylight,
Streams full of stars, like skies at night.
No time to turn at Beauty's glance,
And watch her feet, how they can dance.
No time to wait till her mouth can
Enrich that smile her eyes began.
A poor life this if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare.**

William Henry Davies

Enquire, investigate, doubt yourself and others. To find truth you must not cling to your convictions; if you are sure of the immediate, you will never reach the ultimate.

Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj, I am That, p242